THE

WARNING CLOCK;

OR,

THE VOICE OF THE

New Year.

BY MRS. CAMERON,

Author of "Margaret Whyte," &c. &c.

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THE

WARNING CLOCK.

MANY years ago, two little children disobliged a tender father very highly, by their rebellious and undutiful conduct; so much so that he banished them to a distance from himself: but as he had still thoughts of pity towards them, he placed over them a faithful nurse, whose business it was to watch their behaviour, and to report faithfully to them such messages as he might vouchsafe from time to time to send to them.

Early one fine morning, as these two little children were sleeping side by side, their nurse came into their room; and she said, "Arise, my little children, you have a long journey to take to-day,

and you must lose no more time in sleep."

"Where are we going?" asked one of the little girls, whose name was Diligence.

"You are going home; and I hope you will reach your father's house before night: for your elder brother has sent you word that your father desires to see you this very day; and when you return, he will kill for you the fatted calf, and there will be music and dancing!"

"And is our father willing to forgive us?" said Diligence, earnestly.

"Yes," answered the nurse; "your elder brother has interceded for you, and you are no more to be banished from his house: and even now, your father is looking for you, and, no doubt, when you are yet a great way off, he will run and fall on your neck, and kiss you."

Then Diligence rose in great haste

from her bed, and put on her clothes; and when she was dressed, she called to her sister, and she said, "Sister, are you not rising?"

Then Indolence rubbed her eyes, and she answered, faintly, "I was dreaming so pleasantly; why do you awake me?"

Diligence. I awake you to tell you the good news; our father has sent for us!

Indolence. I am coming, but I cannot open my eyes yet.

Diligence. But we must be at our father's house by night.

Indolence. There are many hours till night; I cannot get up yet, I must have a little more sleep. (So she shut her eyes, and turned herself round, and was asleep again in a few moments.)

Then the nurse said to Diligence, "You must not lose any more time; gird yourself for your journey, and here is a staff which your father has

sent you, and I have with me certain other refreshments, provided by his kindness for you to eat and drink by the way, and to strengthen you, for the journey is long."

"Oh!" answered Diligence, "I cannot leave my sister behind me! must she never see my father's house? Oh! Indolence, my sister." Then Diligence awoke Indolence, and she said to her, "My sister, my beloved sister, awake, and come with me. I am going to the land that is very far off: we have lived in the house of our banishment together, O let us live together in our father's mansions."

Indolence opened her eyes, and stared vacantly at Diligence. "I will sleep one more hour, and then I will follow you," she said. So she slept again, and Diligence tried in vain to awaken her.

Just then the clock struck; and the nurse said to Diligence, "You must

wait no longer, the time is urgent. I will strive to waken your sister when you are gone."

Then she put into the hands of Diligence her staff and the sweet refreshments prepared for her, and she gave her directions for the journey, and pointed her way to the Everlasting Hills, among which her father's palace stood.

So Diligence gave a last farewell look at her sleeping sister, and turned

her face towards her father's house. The shadows of the morning were long, and the dew was on the grass, when the little pilgrim set off. She began her journey betimes, her steps were light and cheerful, and the innocent gaiety of childhood was sanctified and nourished by holy hope and love.

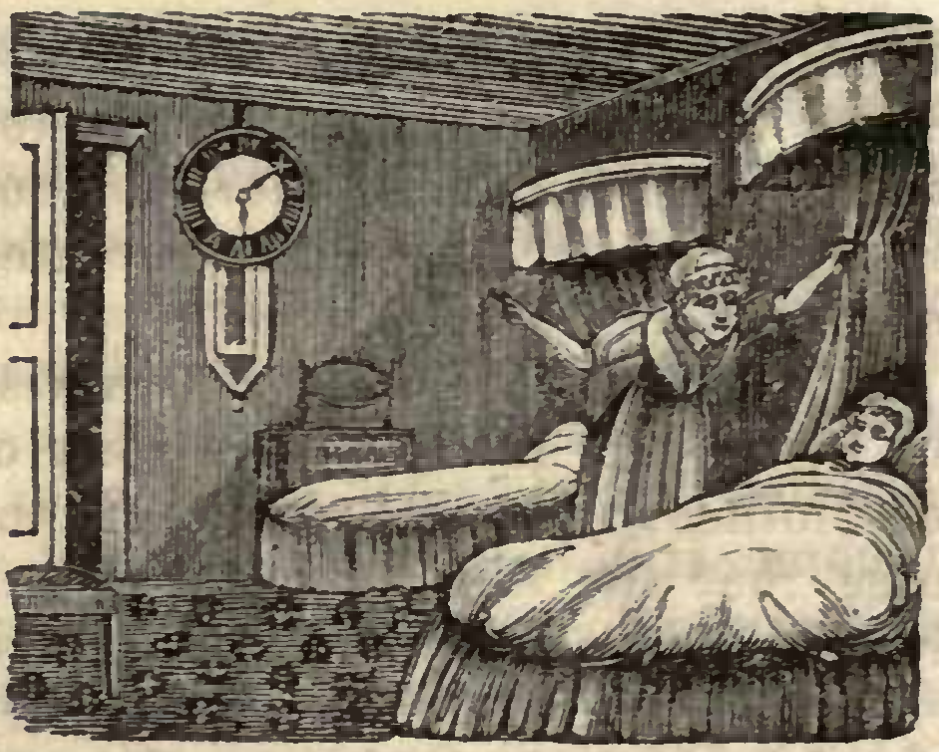
In the mean time, Indolence lay sleeping on her bed of down. Again the clock struck, and the nurse knocked loudly at her door. But she faintly answered, "I will get up presently." Again she slept—and slept till the nurse knocked more loudly; and she started up just in time to count the clock striking twelve. Its deep and solemn sound struck her ear, and she recollected that her sister had been set off nearly six hours. "How shall I overtake her?" said she. "It is impossible."

The nurse just at that moment came in, and rejoicing to find her awake, she

affectionately repeated all her father's tender invitations, she dwelt upon the great things her elder brother had done for her, and she earnestly entreated and urged her to arise.

At length she prevailed with her so far, that she began to put on some of her clothes; and she promised the nurse that she would make haste to dress herself. But her faithful adviser had scarcely left the room, when a fit of drowsiness coming on, she persuaded herself that it would be better for her just to take one little nap, before she undertook her long and fatiguing journey.

The noon had passed and the afternoon was fast wearing away, when the nurse, who had been waiting below with a staff and refreshments for Indolence, came up again into her room, and to her great grief found her still asleep. Again she awoke her, and in an angry voice bade her count the hour of six.



"It is twelve hours since your sister set out," said the nurse, "and she has probably reached her father's house in peace, while you are still sleeping here. How many times has that clock vainly called unto you, 'Up, and be doing!'"

"It is not yet too late," answered Indolence: "many travellers begin their journey at a later hour than this."

"It is true," replied the nurse, "that this is sometimes the case; but it is rarely so: for it is very hazardous and

very fatiguing to travel through bad roads, when the freshness of the morning is past, and the light of the day is fading away. The twilight of morning is the forerunner of the sun, and we walk by that twilight in sweet expectation; but the twilight of evening is succeeded by the darkness of night. But come, it is better late than never. Lose no time, lose not an instant to begin your journey. Awake! awake!"

"When the clock strikes seven I will set off," answered Indolence: "I shall then have several hours before midnight; and it will be cooler at that time, and I shall travel with greater ease: at present, the sultriness of the evening is insupportable."

The nurse shook her head, and withdrew; for Indolence had closed her eyes, and closed them in eternal sleep. For the clock tolled the hour of seven, and eight, and nine, and ten, and Indolence awoke not; and before the hour

of eleven had struck, a messenger arrived at the house where Indolence was asleep: and he was in haste, and would brook no delay, and his errand was this —to say that Diligence was arrived safely at her father's house, that she was clothed in white, and had rings upon her hand and shoes upon her feet; that she rested herself after her journey in the presence of her father and her brother, and refreshed herself with their smiles and the tokens of

their love. He had also to say to Indolence, that her day of grace was passed for ever, and the doors of her father's house were closed against her. The commission of the messenger was, further,—to convey Indolence to the dark and dreadful abode of the slothful and unprofitable servant, to the abode of *outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth: where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

Then was it fulfilled, that the child that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

L.

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